

Hub: 7. 695. 3

A

10 0 0  
13 6 8  
11 13 0

# SERMON

PREACHED In

CHRIST-CHURCH

BEFORE

His Excellency the Lord Deputy

And The

Parliament of IRELAND,

On Sunday the 27th of October, 1695.



By RICHARD, Lord Bishop of Clogher.

DUBLIN,

Printed for William Norman in Dames-Street, Eliphal Dobson, and Patrick Campbell, 1695.

Tuesday the 29th of October 1695.

By the Lords Spiritual & Temporal  
in Parliament Assembled.

ORDERED,

On motion, that the Earl of Drogheda and the Lord of Longford do give the Thanks of this House to the Lord Bishop of Clogher for his Sermon Preached at Christ's-Church on Sunday last, being the 27th of October, 1695. And desire his Lordship would cause his Sermon to be Printed.

Gerard Bor. Cler.  
Parliamentorum.

07-1611

A

## S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

At Christ-Church, &amp;c.

Rom. 12. Verse 2.

*And be not conformed unto this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable, and perfect will of God.*

**T**HE Holy Apostle does in the preceding verse most passionately exhort the *Romans* to be truly thankful unto God; and in gratitude for the many mercies he had bestowed upon them, beseeches them to dedicate and devote themselves to his service. In order to which, he does persuade them to renounce and forsake the vicious customs of the world, to reject its practices, and not suffer the wicked examples of the Times to have any influence upon them: and then shews them the necessity of a Spiritual Transformation, and presses them to take new methods, to alter their erroneous Opinions, and be perfectly renewed in their mind. For by such Renovation they might attain to the knowledge of the Divine Will, which would dispel the cloudy mists of their Ignorance, and rectify their mistaken notions of Good and Evil. By it should they be fully enabled to under-

understand their duty, and clearly discern, approve and practise the Will of God, as may be easily collected from these words; *And be not conformed to this World, &c.*

In which you may observe these three things,

1. A Dehortation against conformity to the world. *Be not conformed to this world.*

2. An Exhortation unto Transformation. *But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

3. The end or reason of both. *That ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect Will of God.*

1. A Dehortation against Conformity to this World.

St. Paul, who understood the will of God, and how men might best attain to the knowledge thereof, deports the *Romans* from conforming themselves to the modes and customs of the world; he well knew, that to contract friendship with it, was to be at enmity with God; the ways and practices thereof being contrary to his commands: and therefore he gives this caution, to avoid the customs of the world, *i. e.* the Poms and Vanities, or the manners and actions of wicked men; for so the world is taken, *1 Job. 2. 15.* For the things in the world, which he calls there, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life:* which include all fordid and covetous, all carnal and impure desires, all proud and haughty, all cruel and indecent shews and actions.

These were solemnly renounced by Christians in Baptism: they were not to covet the world, nor the things thereof, which were all vain, transient, and unsatisfying, and in their highest enjoyment no way able to satisfy the rational soul of man; which we by daily experience find true: for the more we have of them, the more we cover, like men in a Droply; or as *Pliny* speaks of the



*Parthians*, the more they drink, the more they thirst. *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Dives*, *Cesar* and *Pompey*, all the Rich, Voluptuous, and Great Men of the earth, could never limit and bound their restless desires and appetites with their greatest enjoyments.

To see *Alexander* after all his Conquests complain that he could not be Master of more, is too great an instance of man's unsatisfiable desires; so that we have reason to restrain our thoughts, and not be eager and impatient in the pursuit of the greatest sub-lunary things; for if we could monopolize all that the world affords, we should still wish for more, and must at last cry out with *St. Austin*, *Non satiat animam nisi incorruptibilis gaudii certa eternitas*. Nothing but the eternal and incorruptible joys of Heaven can satiate and fill the Soul. Submit we, then to the *Déhortation*, and never immoderately set our hearts upon such deceitful & painted Nothings; but condemn them, and live above them, and that will be the greatest pleasure we can find. And as we are not to delight in the Pomp and Grandure of the World, so must we shun the sinful and corrupt practices of the men of the World. Their Conversation is dangerous, and their evil Example may prove fatal and destructive to us, as it has done to others in all former Ages, who did foolishly forsake Virtue, and embrace Vice, because it was committed by many Great & Rich men; as if the Number and Quality of Offenders, could legitimate the vilest actions. And alas! how many are so even in these days? Is not the Populace still influenced and moved by the example of those above them? Their open and audacious committing of sin, lessens the apprehensions of its guilt; and they follow them in their Vices, as they do in their fashions, and think they may safely imitate their betters. *St. Cyprian* complains that it was so in his time: What was usual and common, was thought lawful then, and it has ever been thus pernicious. How did men cheat and cozen, counterfeit and dissemble in the Reign of *Tiberius*, who was sufficiently Master of those Arts? And no sooner did *Julian* turn Apostate, but multitudes ran into Atheism. And we know, *Nero* made Lust & Luxury, Drunkenness & Debauchery, a mode among the *Roman*

Gentlemen. But on the contrary, when *Constantine* govern'd, Christianity did soon flourish, and Vertue grew into reputation: And the holy example of *Theodosius* made his Palace a seminary of Piety and Devotion.

Thus powerful & attractive is Example to Good or Evil, Great men being like the *Primum Mobile* in the Heavens, or the springs in *Mechanick Engines*, which make all the wheels go round. As the Sun attracts the inferior Vapors, as the Loadstone draws Iron, and Jeat straw, so do they draw the Chaff of the World, the worst part of the People after them into their Enormitys, and become highly guilty of their Transgressions: Whereas alas! their own Sins will sufficiently fuel the infernal flames, which they will sadly think of, when in piercing shrieks, and groans, many of the lower sort will accuse them for bringing them to that place of torment: They are now like the Panther, which draws other Creatures to him by his sweet breath, and then devours them. What e're they do, seems plausible enough to raw and unsettled heads, whom Ignorance or Interest, Ambition or Dependance may transform into any shape. But, as in this life, the presence of Great men won't lessen the pains of the Rack or Wheel; no more will our being led by them, any way diminish or alleviate our future torments; but we alas! must pay dear for our imitation, and their sins of Example will infinitely add to their own misery. And how will it then rack and torture them to think, that they, whom a generous Education, and Principles of Honor, did oblige to be Precedents of Justice and Charity, of Temperance and Sobriety, and all other Graces and Vertues, were sometimes the great Patterns of Vice & Debauchery? and did by an ignoble indulgence in Sin, ruine themselves and others also?

Let this consideration induce all who pretend to Honour or Gentility, to give a good Example in their several stations, and distinguish themselves from others by their Vertues. Let them seriously consider, that Religion is the true Enamel of Nobility, and the chief Ornament of Great Houses; it joyns them in a near alliance

alliance to God, and the more they excel in Holiness, the more Noble are they to be esteemed in the Heraldry of Heaven. True Honour being a Ray or Emanation from the King of Kings, which the Just and Holy may only glory in. Such have an affinity and cognation unto Christ, for he calls them his Brethren and Sisters, *Mal.* 12. 50.

If they desire to be related to him, they must be Holy, they must conform to his Will, live according to his Injunctions, and oppose the world in every thing that is Sinful, and let all men see they are both Great and Good. They should look upon Vice as a blemish and stain of Honour, and think it below them to be guilty of Sin, or give a bad Example in any thing to their Inferiors.

Thus will they teach their Children, Dependants, and Followers, to be good, they will soon make the Age better; for which Posterity will honour their Memory, and they will be advanced to the highest glories in Heaven.

I beseech you therefore, obey the Dehortation, and be not conformed unto the World, but shine clear in the Firmament of Honour, and give a bright Example to all below you, and shew your love to God, and your zeal to his Glory, by suffering none to commit any Sin before you; discountenance it by all the ways and methods you can, and put a stop to the increase of all Impieties, especially those rude and most abominable sins of Cursing and Swearing, which now abound far more than ever they did among us; and contribute all you can to a general Reformation in others, and be ye your selves Precedents of all Vertues among them, and never do any thing contrary to the Principles of Religion, Reason and Honour. Ye are born to greater things, and 'tis below you to sin with the Vulgar. Abhor their Vices then, as you do their Customs, and live up to the Rules of the holy Jesus, and most carefully avoid the sinful modes of the World, and continue in all Christian Regularity and Order, and be now quite alter'd from  
what

what you were, and perfectly Renewed in your Mind ; which is the second thing.

2dly. An Exhortation unto Transformation, *But be ye Transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Man was made the Excellency of the Creation, Crowned with Innocency in Paradise, his Soul the lively Image of the Immortal God ; but he alas ! soon deform'd himself with Sin, and made that which was Pure, Filthy ; that which was design'd to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost, a Cage of unclean Birds ; full of carnal Lusts and Pollutions ; so odious to God that he was thrown out of Paradise, and exposed to Temporal and Eternal Punishments, and is in no capacity of pleasing him, or recovering his favour, unless he be perfectly alter'd from that unclean estate, and cleansed from his natural and actual Impurities ; for *they that are in the flesh cannot please God, Rom. 8. 8.* While we continue in that natural estate, all we do is displeasing in his sight. Our very Prayer is an abomination, *Prov. 28. 9.* not Abominable, but *Abomination* in the abstract, to denote how odious the actions of a sinful man not transformed and renewed, are unto God. He may do something Ethically and Morally good, in relation to men ; but nothing Theologically and Divinely good in reference to God and Religion. As St. *Austin* says, *Virutes quas, &c.* Such Vertues, unless they relate to God, are rather to be esteemed Vices than Vertues. For the whole mass of our Nature was depraved by our original Corruption ; and there is a general ineptitude and indisposition in us to any thing that is good : Our Principles are vitiated, and our Faculties disorder'd, so that we are prone to all evil. *In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,* said the Apostle, *Rom. 7. 18.* There was a Law in his members warring against the Law of his mind. And, *Rom. 8. 7.* The Carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. In that state there is so much Natural and Personal Impurity, such natural Enmity against God, so much natural Infidelity, Ignorance and Folly

Folly in man, that till he be transform'd and alter'd, he cannot please God.

By which you see the great and absolute necessity of obeying this Exhortation, that as Sin has deform'd us, Grace may transform us, and change us again, that so we may no longer Conform unto the World, but be thoroughly Transform'd by the Renewing of our Minds. That is, that we be quite alter'd from what we were, and shew it by the mortification of our carnal Affections, and the alteration of our Live, and by our constant enquiry and search after the things above; that we be changed from our natural wickedness in all the parts of our Soul, beginning from the highest, which are Understanding and Reason, by which the Spirit of God worketh upon the inferior; God's Grace following the Order of Nature in its Operations.

This is now our work, we must *forfake all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, be clearly alter'd from all its Impurities, and we must be Regenerate and born a-new. We must strive to get not only our sensual Affections, but our Understanding, our Will, and all our Faculties spiritualiz'd, and made very pure and holy, that so we may prove, approve, and know experimentally what is the Will of God.

And the way to effect this, is, to apply your selves to God, in and through Jesus Christ, to work the great work of Regeneration in you. You must begg of God by his invincible Power and Grace, by his Spirit accompanying his Word, to quicken you that are dead in trespasses and sin, To renew you in your Mind, your Will, and all the Powers of your Soul. To convince you savingly of *Sin, of Righteousness, and Judgment*, and to make you heartily embrace Christ and Salvation. To consecrate your selves to his service all the days of your life, and to live in habitual Holiness, and uniform Obedience.

This is it you are exhorted unto, and this is a short description

of Regeneration, or Spiritual Transformation : And if you are such, you may easily discover it, by the great alteration of your Nature ; for you will then hate Sin, and abominate Vices ; you will delight in Religious Duties, and highly value the company and conversation of holy Persons : you will desire and strive to please God in all things, and will never wilfully and knowingly offend him ; you will love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and conform your selves to his Will in every thing ; you will strive to be united to him, and to have a closer Union and Communion with him, and will thirst, and breath, and pant after him ; and long to enjoy him eternally in Heaven. You will look upon the Body as the Prison of the Soul, and often think of the happy time when you will be released from its chains ; and while you are here, you will be meek and lowly, patient and submissive, humble and obedient : You will Read & Meditate, you will Pray often, and Communicate frequently ; you will wean your hearts from worldly enjoyments, and set your affections on things above. And, as St. Paul says, *You will be dead to the World, and have your life hid with Christ in God ;* and will joyfully embrace and cherish all the motions and persuasions of the Holy Ghost, and give up your selves to his Guidance and Conduct in every thing, and grow from one degree of Grace to another, till you perfect Holiness in the fear of God. In short, you will live a very heavenly and holy life here, and long for the Company and Communion of Saints and Angels above.

And how much happier is he, who is thus alter'd, and lives thus, than he who conforms unto the World, and is still a slave to her customs ? Is not Virtue more lovely and easy than Vice ? There is certainly a wonderful Beauty in Holiness, and most transporting delights in Religion ; the truth of which, some pious and devout Christians, who conform to the Precepts of the Gospel, and live as they ought to do, can testify and declare ; they find unspeakable sweetness in Devotion, most solid and substantial pleasures in Religion : They sometimes enjoy Divine Communion, and are reviv'd with the Comforts which the Holy Spirit



rit drops and distills into their hearts. They know this state of life is much more eligible, were there no future expectations. To be Holy and Virtuous, Just and Honourable in all our Actions, creates vast pleasure even in this life to the Rational Soul: they are more Real, True, and Lasting, than the short imaginary delights which come from our Conforming to the World in her most charming Enormities.

But a Regenerate Life, a full Conformity to the Law of God, and living up to the Evangelical Precepts, is the indispensable Duty of every man, who pretends himself a Christian. Without this, 'tis in vain to hope for entrance into the *New Jerusalem*. There is the *Holy of Holies*, in which the God of Holiness dwells in unspeakable Glory, and no filthy, debauched, and impure Soul, without true Repentance, and Reformation, will ever find admittance there; no one that is a Slave to this World, can be a Free Denizen of that Great City.

For while we continue chained to the vanities, and sinful customs of this Life, while we are sensual and luxurious, we can't discern nor practice the will of God, and so can't enter into that Glory, in which the holy observers of his will shall for ever triumph and rejoice. Obey we then the Exhortation, and strive all we can to be Transformed: Let us mortify our Lusts and Passions, and let no part of the Old Man remain in us, but be renewed in the Spirit of our mind, Eph. 4. 2. Read that whole Chapter, and see what alteration God requires in us, and Examine we all our actions by the infallible Rule of his holy Will, and bewail our Apostatizing and Revolting from it. Let us repent for the least violation of it, and assure ourselves, if we forsake the sinful practices of the World, God will make great discoveries of his Will unto us. Our Understanding, which is by Nature cloudy and dark, will be illuminated from above: God will instruct us by his holy Spirit, and then only, and not before, shall we know what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. which is the 3d thing to be discoursed on.



3dly. The end or reason of our being renewed in our mind. That we may know what is the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

By the Will of God, is meant his Preceptive Will declared in his Commandments: not his Absolute Will, which the Schoolmen call *Voluntas signi & beneplaciti*. 'Tis his Preceptive Will that we must endeavour to understand, for this is revealed, the other is secret and obscure, which we contradict often unknown to us, and without sin, as when we pray earnestly against that which he has determin'd shall be done. As if God has appointed my Friend shall dye, which I pray against, being ignorant of his secret Determination and Will. But his Preceptive and Revealed Will we can never contradict without Sin, it is promulgated, and we must not pretend ignorance; and therefore it highly concerns us to know it. And this we shall never rightly attain to, till we are Transformed and Renewed in our mind. A Drunkard or a Glutton has no right Conception, no perfect Idea or Representation of heavenly things. A mind drown'd in Sensuality, and fixed to the Earth, can't discern them. He that will understand them, must have a pure heart, a chaste spirit, a sober mind, a calm and serene Temper, not ruffled or disturbed with violent and unruly passions, for while the mind is carnal and impure, such will its conceptions be: But when it is spiritualized and purified, 'tis capable of Divine Emanations, its Perceptions are more Refined and Abstracted, and then, and not before, will it discover the native Excellency of Spiritual things, and behold them in their true and genuine Light.

The Pythagoreans say, to understand Philosophy a-right, there must be an abstracting and withdrawing our selves from the Body, and sure there must be the like to understand the Divine Will: We must withdraw our hearts from the World, and be spiritualized, before we attain to that. Our highest acquirements of natural Knowledge, and secular Learning can't reach it: There must be some impresses and infusions from above; which God is pleased

pleased to afford to the Regenerate and Holy Christians ; there must be a quickning & illuminating by the Holy Ghost, before we can perceive it. The want of this made the Pharisees and great Scholars of the World continue in darkness, and the shadow of death : they were in a natural state, and could not discern the Will of God : their Philosophy and Humane Reason could not apprehend it : for, as St. Paul says, *The Natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discern'd, 1 Cor. 2. 14. And Rom, 8. 7. The carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* The Unregenerate Man is not fitted, and inwardly prepared to understand the Will of God. A supernatural Object requires a supernatural Power of the Understanding to apprehend and conceive it rightly, and he that is not renewed in mind, is destitute of that supernatural Power and Faculty, and so can't discern the Will of God, and spiritual things : *He has eyes and sees not*, he is spiritually blind and deaf, and cannot see what is the Will of God, nor hearken to the dictates of his Spirit, or any saving advice which is given him by the Ministers of the Gospel.

And this is a great and true reason why we are so unsuccessful in our spiritual Exhortations, why the Preaching of the Gospel has no more influence on those who are conform'd to the customs of the World? Can we expect that a lame man shall run, or a blind man distinguish colours? Will an Epicure regard discourses of Temperance? or a lewd Woman perswasives to Chastity? Can we get a Covetous Miser to distribute his Gold? or a Proud Man to lower his lofty thoughts? no, 'tis not to be expected : Mens hearts are not capable of Divine Truths, while the World and the Vanities thereof fill them up. We must raise our Affections from things of the Earth, and be renewed in our mind, before we can submit to the pure and holy Precepts of the Gospel.

While men conform their lives to the VWorld, and wallow

in its Pollutions, they see no danger, but walk securely by the Pitt of Destruction. You would pity a blind man that had no Guide among Boggs and Quick sands, where he is every minute in danger of being swallowed up: and in such, and a worse condition is that man who is spiritually blind, and is not transform'd in his mind: for alas! he is hoodwink'd to his own danger, and sees not the Bottomless Pitt which he is ready to fall into; but runs on in carnal security, never discerning this Good VVill of God, nor desiring to know it. One bodily blind would covet a Guide; but the spiritually blind are not sensible of their condition, and so run on to their ruine, contemning all spiritual Guides, and do not regard to know the VVill of God. From all which, you see the great care we must take to be renewed in our mind, if we would know, and prove what is the good and perfect Will of God.

And as soon as that is done, the eyes of our Understanding will be opened and clear'd, and then shall we be enabled by Divine Grace to know that God's Law is altogether good, lovely, and compleat, and his Commandments to be on'y right. But this a Natural man conform'd to the proud and haughty customs of the World can't do: For God will not discover his Will to the high and lofty, to the conceited and arrogant, but to the humble and meek Christian: *The meek will be guide in Judgment, and the meek will he teach his way, Ps. 25. 9. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* Such men come soonest to the knowledge of the Will of God: They have clearer Notions of Spiritual Truths than others: Their eyes are sooner enlightned, their judgment is convinced by the Word, and their Soul is converted by the Law of God, and so come to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect Will of God, that is, they search, consider, approve and obey it, for so the word prove signifies. It intimates our Approbation of his Will, and our Conformity thereunto; so that in this part you have, First, An Act or Experiment, to prove. Second y, The Object of the Act, The Will of God. Thirdly, The Adjunct of that Object, which is three-fold, the Goodness, the Acceptability, and the Perfection of

of it, on which I might ground a large discourse: But I shall briefly tell you, that the Will of God, is good in it self: There is not the least pravity or obliquity therein. Whatever he commands is good in it self, and good to us: and he also enjoyns nothing but what is acceptable to Rational men, and correspondent to his own mind; so that no demurr or dispute ought to be in its observati-  
 on: But we should with all readiness perform it. And lastly, his Will is Perfect, without any defect or blemish: We must not add unto, nor take away from his Commands in his Word: His Law being in every point full and perfect. Humane Laws have often had their imperfections: *Lycurgus* failed in allowing Theft to the *Lacedemonians*, and *Plato* in tolerating a Community of Women, *Draco* wrote his Laws in Blood, in putting the *Athenians* to death for every fault, small or great. But *the Law of the Lord is perfect*. Take a strict survey of all the Evangelical Precepts, and you'll find them easy, pleasant, and perfect, every way agreeable to Publick Communities and private Oeconomies: and such as every man ought to observe and obey, not only for the good of his Soul, but because they tend highly to his advantage and reputation in this World. Nor is there any Duty or Vertue commanded by the Law of God, which is not of this kind. I shall instance but in two or three, which you are so often enjoyn'd to practise, and which men meerly moral, unacquainted with the Principles of Revealed Religion, have most strictly observed.

17. In speaking Truth. This God enjoyns you to do, *Eph. 4. 25.* He is *the God of Truth*; and to deceive, delude, or equivocate, is an *abomination to him*, *Prov. 12. 2.* 'Tis put in the abstract, which intimates how exceeding odious and detestable lying is in his sight. And the Equity, Reasonableness, and Perfection of this Law will appear to Natural reason, if we consider that without it, there is no living happily even in this World. All Traffick and Commerce must cease, no man will freely Trade with another, unless he can depend upon his Word, and so Bodies Politick must be impoverish'd, and Communities destroyed. No  
 Quarter

Quarter must be taken in the Field, no Articles accepted by Besieged Towns, and men must leave off to associate & converse together. For what satisfaction can you have to talk with men, when you doubt there is some secret reserve, some collusion & deceit in all their asseverations? 'Tis therefore just, reasonable & necessary, that men should always speak Truth, that so we may not distrust what they say, and suspect the performance of their Promises and Compacts. And indeed we may blush to see Heathens exceed Christians in this Vertue. *Marcus Regulus* would not violate his Parole to the *Carthaginians*, tho he knew his return to them would cost him his life. And in all Histories, most infamous characters are put upon those who were guilty of this Vice, it being a sign of a poor mean Spirit, a base, cowardly, and dishonest heart to lye: For Truth is open and bold, and conducing to the good of Mankind in general, ought always to be observed, tho we had no Divine Precepts for it. And 'tis more natural, easy, and honourable to speak truth than to lye; and being also more beneficial and advantageous to the world, we should always conscientiously practice it: Seeing, unless we do so, we obstruct the Trade of our Countrey, honest men will despise and shun us, and the God of Truth won't admit us to dwell in his Holy Hill, *Pf. 15. 2.*

The like might I say of those Divine Precepts which enjoyn Justice and Honesty, and do prohibit Cozenage and Fraud in our Employments and Offices, our Dealing and Bargains, how agreeable they are to reason, and how much they conduce to the good of Societies, and the ennobling and enriching of Cities and Nations, and how strictly they have been observed by Moral men. And surely, if men would consider the dishonour of Injustice, the scandal of Dishonesty, and the perpetual shame and disgrace which attend them, they would perfectly abominate them, and religiously keep those strict Laws which God has given us, to be just and upright in all our actions; it being very pleasant and profitable to be so. Whereas Injustice involves men in Law Suits and Troubles, and often reduces them to want and beg-

**beggary** : it disquiets the Mind, and racks and tortures the Conscience, and makes men feel the flashes of Hell before they fall into them, and brings infamy and reproach upon themselves and their Posterity.

And no less may be said for those Laws which God has made for Chastity and Temperance : they are also most rational and advantageous, and do highly tend to our health and safety, to our honour and profit, and do infinitely conduce to our understanding the good Will of God : for when our reason is undisturbed, and the heart is free from all carnal impurities, we shall have clearer Notions of the Divine Will, and be more able to understand the Equity and Justice, the Reasonableness and Advantage of his Laws, and so make it our Election and Choice to approve and obey them, finding our Conformity to them so beneficial here and hereafter.

But if we give the Reins to our sensual Appetites, if we wallow in Lust and Luxury, in Filthiness and Debauchery, we can't discern spiritual things, nor assent to the Law of God, and do wholly unfit and incapacitate our selves, not only for Religious Duties, for Divine and Heavenly Contemplations and Actions, but for all worldly Business. We weaken and enervate Nature, grow stupid and sottish, and can't manage our Callings and Employments as we ought to do, and so spend our Estates, ruine our Families, and fall into Ignominy and Disgrace here, and must be eternally punished hereafter.

By which you see the Reasonableness, the Goodness, and Perfection of God's Laws against these Vices ; and I might easily prove the like in all the other Branches of the Divine Law, and shew you that his Will is to be obeyed in all things, and that he requires nothing of you, but what conduces to the Publick Good, and to your own great Benefit and Advantage, to your Health, your Credit and Honour in this Life, and your eternal Happiness in the Life to come. And therefore 'tis your Interest as well as



your Duty, to strive all you can to know his Statutes and Commandments, and constantly to obey them, which you'll be enabled to do, if you observe these two things.

1<sup>st</sup>. If you diligently and devoutly attend the Readers and Expositors of his Law, the Ministers of his Gospel, whom he has appointed to explain his Will, and expound his Law unto you: if you are of an humble & docile temper; if you are piously attentive, and do conscientiously observe their Exhortations and Instructions, and Pray earnestly that you may profit by their Ministrations and Labours. Then will the Holy Ghost accompany and convey their Comments and Expositions of the Divine Law to your hearts: he will infuse heavenly knowledge into your Souls, and enable you to understand and obey his Will: and the more humble you are in hearing, the more will he communicate unto you. For, as the devout *Kempis* says, *God does in an instant raise up the humble mind to understand more of the eternal Truth, than can be gotten in ten years study in the Schools: He teaches without the noise of Words, and scuffling of Arguments.*

2<sup>dly</sup>. If you desire to know what is this good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God: You must constantly and carefully Read the Holy Scriptures; in them is the Will of God revealed, his Laws and Statutes are there upon Record; and, blessed be God, you have them in your own Native Language: and therefore consult them daily, peruse them diligently, and delight in that most holy Book the Bible, above all Books; and God will reward and crown your Piety with the knowledge of his Will, which is contained therein. Your Intellectuals and Morals will be clear'd, improv'd, and exalted by it: *It will enlighten your eyes, convert your soul, and rejoice your heart, as the Psalmist speaks: The more you read, the more you will understand, and the difficulty & obscurity will vanish by degrees: the clouds will be scatter'd, and beams of light will shine in upon your souls from the Author and Inspirer of those Sacred Writings: and he will still gratify your pious desires with further discoveries of his Will:*

For



For the truth of which I appeal to the joyful Experience of every devout Christian who is daily conversant in the Holy Scriptures: Let me therefore beg of you to read some part of them every day, and to have them daily read in your Houses, and by this means you will come to know what is the Will of God, and will be moved and influenced to obey it, and you will readily consent to the Truth of this Text, that *the Will of the Lord is good, acceptable, and perfect*: and will cry out with David, *Pf. 19. 6. The Statutes of the Lord are right, the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul*

And seeing it is so, and that none can attain to the knowledge of them, but they who are transformed and renewed in their mind, let us endeavour all we can to be thus changed and alter'd, and willingly submit to all Gods holy Injunctions, and exactly perform whatever is agreeable to his blessed Will. Let us now abandon the most vain, prodigal & sinful customs of the world, in our Garb, our Equipage & Entertainments, in our perpetual Visits and vast Consumption of our precious time, for which we must be accountable at the great day. Let us live *soberly, righteously, and godly* in our generation, abominate all impurities and defilements, and be most strictly and exemplarily holy in our Conversation, having always a quick sense and right apprehension of our duty in every part thereof. And whatever is pleasing to God, do we carefully observe & perform, tho the Greatest should neglect and slight it, and so continue all our days to the utmost of our Power, without offending or disobeying this holy Will of God. This we are advised unto by the same Apost'e, *Phil. 1. 10. Abound more and more in Knowledge, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ.* (where the word *δοξάζειν* has the same signification it hath here) That we may try and examine, approve and practise all Christian Vertues, that we persevere and hold out to the end, and never suffer our selves to be seduced into the committal of any known sin by the instigations of the Devil, the violence of Persecution, or the flattering temptations of the World:

World: But remain constant observers of the Doctrine of Christ, that so others may be converted by our Example; and have that great veneration and honor for the Christian Religion which it most justly deserves.

This is the duty of all the Regenerate, of all who are renewed in their mind, to practise and obey the Will of God in every particular: And therefore let us search the sacred Oracles; and find out what it is, and never wilfully transgress it in the least Act; for all his commands are like himself, very holy and just; *his yoke is easy, and his burthen is light*, his service is good, honorable, and excellent. No Master so just and kind, so munificent and bountiful to his servants, no employment so profitable here and hereafter: Let us then examine all our life past, lament and bewail our Omissions and Failures, and for the future willingly and cheerfully give up our selves to his service, no more conforming to the World, *But being Transformed by the Renewing of our Mind*, being quite changed and alter'd from our evil habits, and wholly regenerate and both a new; that so we may prove, approve, and obey the good, acceptable and perfect Will of God; in doing which we shall be happy here, and eternally happy hereafter; which God in his infinite mercy grant unto us all, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ: To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honor and Glory now and for evermore. Amen,

Amen.

FINIS.

